## Disabilities Dialogue Supporting Children with Disabilities who are also Dual Language Learners

Tam O'Donnell: Welcome. Thank you so much for being here with us today. We're very excited to bring to you the topic of supporting children who are dual language learners with disabilities. We have a team of people working together today to make sure that we -- everything goes smoothly and that we meet your needs. I'm Tam O'Donnell.

Dawn Williams: Hi, I'm Dawn Williams.

Tam: Together we're curriculum specialists joining you from the National Center on Quality Teaching and Learning headquarters here in Seattle. We have Susan Stewart joining us. She's providing technical assistance from California. And then of course we have Dr. Ami Santos joining us from the University of Illinois and Dr. Lillian Duran joining us from Utah State University.

Dawn: That's right. So we just want to go over a few of the webinar logistics with you. So let's go ahead and -- we also want to mention that Amanda Bryans from the Office of Head Start joins us for these webinars. She is kind of the disabilities lead at the Office of Head Start, and she'll be available to respond to some of the questions anyone might have in the chat box and also can hop on just in case we have any policy-related questions you might hear from her as well. So we really appreciate that the Office of Head Start is on the webinar with us so we can also use that as a source of support.

Tam: Yes. Your time is very valuable to us, and we very much appreciate all of the work that you do to support children and families, and so everyone is onboard making sure that we can support you the best that we can. So now it is my pleasure to introduce our guests today. We have Dr. Lillian Duran. She's currently faculty at Utah State University. She spent the last 10 years consulting with and establishing research programs for Head Start. She's bilingual, and she also was an early childhood special education teacher for nine years. So we're very thankful that you're here with us to share your wealth of expertise, Lillian.

Lillian Duran: I'm glad to be here today.

Dawn: Great. Oh, good. And we also have Dr. Ami Santos with us here. She is currently faculty at the University of Illinois and has a long career in research around dual language learners and children with disabilities. She also has been working with NCQTL over the course of the grant and also with some of the CSEFEL materials that all of you all are really familiar with. And she's got a lot of great expertise in the field. Speaking of, as an example, we just wanted to show this to you guys in case anybody doesn't have this monograph yet. This is from Young Exceptional Children, and Dr. Ami Santos is one of the editors on this. And this is full of information that is very relevant to what we're talking about today. So if you ever want to hear about more of the research and get some more details about the topic, check this out.

Ami Santos: I just want to add that Lillian Duran is also a co-editor in that as well as our colleague Greg Cheatham over at the University of Kansas.

Dawn: Thank you, Ami. Okay, so I'm so glad you all are with us here today, because we are talking about supporting children with dual language learners -- or supporting children with disabilities who are also dual language learners. And so just to set the stage, can you tell us a little bit more about dual language learners in Head Start?

Lillian: Sure. So Head Start defines dual language learners as children for whom a language other than English was the primary language that parents reported speaking. So that's a technical definition. But certainly it applies to those children who are learning two or more languages, both in home and then across the programs that they're experiencing in Head Start and in their communities.

Dawn: Okay.

Lillian: And about 30 percent of children in Head Start and Early Head Start are currently dual language learners, so it's a large percentage of the children that you're serving. And I'm sure for the listeners out there, you are experiencing that in your programs, which brings a wealth of diversity and opportunity to our programs to learn about other cultures and languages and really have the ability to incorporate that into our programming. And then the percentage of dual language learners with disabilities in Head Start was about 8 percent, and in Migrant Head Start was about 4 percent.

Dawn: Great. Thank you. All right, can you talk a little more about the differences in language backgrounds?

Lillian: Yeah, so I think an important part in understanding dual language learners is to recognize that it's a broad umbrella category when you say dual language learners. But there's different ways that kids end up -- or individuals end up being bilingual. Some children learn two or more languages from birth, and they're simultaneously bilingual. So maybe they have English and Hmong going on at home. Whereas other children might be speaking one primary home language, say Spanish at home, and their first introduction to English, formal introduction, might come through an Early Head Start home visitor or entering into a Head Start preschool program. TV is not a formal introduction to a language. While it provides some passive input, it doesn't have the demand of real-time communication in language. So really when you think about these different categories, you really need look at when kids encounter environments in which they're expected to understand the language and use the language for functional communication.

Dawn: So watching Dora the Explorer is not going to help my child become bilingual.

Ami: Yeah, saying "backpack" and "map" doesn't really get you very far when you're trying to communicate.

Dawn: Okay, good to know.

Lillian: So this is just a little breakout of the different languages that we're seeing in Head Start. Certainly the bulk of the kids are speaking Spanish in addition to English, but there are also a variety of Asian languages such as Hmong, Vietnamese, Chinese. Different African languages. So I used to live in Minnesota and worked in rural Minnesota, and there, there are large populations of

immigrants from Somalia and the Sudan, and so we had languages like Oromo, Anahuac, Nor, Arabic in these small towns in Minnesota. And you wouldn't necessarily think that, but there they are. And where do you find those kids? In Head Start programs. So it puts a big demand on the programs to really serve a diversity of individuals, of children and families who speak many different languages and a lot of low-incidence languages. So it can become very challenging for programs to meet their needs.

Tam: Right. Which is why we have this topic today, and we're so excited that you're going to be sharing all kinds of tips with us. So before we go on, we did want to get you and the audience involved, and we would like to take a quick poll to see what languages are children speaking in the programs that you are working with and supporting. So go ahead and look at the poll and click in your answer. You can choose as many or as few as you'd like, and we'll be back in just a moment to see what the results are.

Dawn: Oh, wow, okay. We're just taking a look at those poll results which you guys are probably seeing now. Really consistent with the data we just showed you. Spanish is at 97 percent, at least for the folks who are listening today. About 31 percent for African languages and 41 percent for Asian languages, which is a little bit more than what we just saw.

Tam: Yeah. So it looks like you guys are encountering quite a bit of diversity in your programs as well. Thank you for taking the time to give us that information. It is really interesting. So, Ami, in my experience as a special educator, though I felt really well prepared to support children with disabilities, when it came to children who were also dual language learners, I was a little more perplexed, and I feel like there were a lot of myths out there that I wasn't quite clear on. Could you talk to us about some of those myths and maybe dispel some of them for us?

Ami: Sure. So let me just make a point about these things. And for one, we know that many of these myths really could become -- could be detrimental to children and families, so it's really important for us to make sure that we totally dispel many of these things, because we want to make sure that we're giving the best -- we're providing the best service for the children and families we work with. So to start with, the first myth that's out there that I think many of you probably have encountered is that if your child is encouraged to speak more than one language, it will cause them developmental delays. So one of the things that people think, that just because you're, you know, quote-unquote, asking or forcing a child or putting a child in a situation where they're speaking more than one language, that it's going to make them delayed. And there's no science to that. In fact, what we know from research is that children do -- are capable of developing and learning multiple languages, and it doesn't make them any more -- it doesn't cause them any kind of disability or any kind of developmental delays because they're learning a new language. As we all know from research in brain development, that is something that we -- that children are capable of, just the capacity of their brains to really acquire these kinds of complex skills. And what they're saying to us is that you have to almost do it as early as you can for many of these children if you want them to learn multiple languages.

Tam: Right. So then what about -- we're talking about children being encouraged to speak more than one language. What about the myth that teaching a child in more than one language causes development delays?

Ami: Yes, and again, that's -- so if you -- so encouraging them to speak, but now you're teaching them, so you're putting them in a situation where there's lots of different inputs of languages in a classroom or in a program, and you're saying, "Oh, that's so confusing to children. I think they're only going to be able to learn one language." Especially if you have a child with a disability, they're going to say, "Oh, you can only just really learn in one language." That's not true. What we know, again, from research is that being bilingual obviously does not inherently cause language, any kind of delay, particularly language delay, because that's where most people think the problem is. But what this also does is that it provides children with more opportunities to access information if they have different languages that are available to them that they can use in a functional way, as Lillian mentioned earlier, too, so that they can learn all these... all this information that's around them. And it's really interesting, because I think children are more likely to really -- to learn these languages more easily than probably even adults, and I think we might be putting more of ourselves into those situations than we -- than necessary.

Tam: So what you're saying is not only is it not harmful, but it actually is beneficial to their learning.

Ami: Absolutely, absolutely. And you would agree with that, Lillian, right?

Lillian: Oh, absolutely. And the only thing I would add, I mean, you said it pretty much perfectly, the only thing I would add is just that across their functional environments they need to use more than one language. So it's not as if we're -- it's a false dichotomy or a choice, because these children need to communicate with their families and in their community, and they need to communicate at school. So we really, as we emphasize functional communication in early childhood, special education, and for children with disabilities, we need to keep that in mind, that they need all of the languages within their natural settings in order to successfully communicate.

Ami: Absolutely. And that takes us to this third myth, that if you have a disability, and forcing this child, again, who has an array, a disability, to learn a new language, that it will make the child struggle more. And that, again, is completely false. And probably that's one of the ones that we've seen out there that's so detrimental to not just the child but to their family unit. Because what you're doing here is that you're telling the families, "Don't talk to your child." Especially if the family themselves, if that's the only language they speak. Say, for example, if they're only speaking Chinese, if they're fluent in that, if you stop them from talking and if their child can only learn in English, if that's what you're telling them, what you're preventing is you're preventing this family to be able to teach their child in the language that they're most --

Tam: Right, and removing any sense of connection that they have to one another.

Ami: Yeah. And we want families to talk to their children. We want them to read books to them. We want them to interact with them. But if you're not allowing them to be able to do that in the language that they're most fluent with, they're not going to do that. But one of the things I want to point out here is that we -- my colleague Greg Cheatham and I did a review of all these studies that have been done with children with disabilities, so children with Down syndrome, children with intellectual disabilities, children who have speech delays and all these things. And we looked at what they were learning, and what was really interesting was if -- what we found was that if children were exposed to

multiple languages to learn specific skills or a broad range of skills, they were more likely to learn them faster and better than they would if they were only taught in one language that we may not be familiar with. The evidence there was pretty compelling for us to say it is a myth to say that children with disabilities are not able to learn other languages beyond their own language.

Tam: Yeah, and I do think this is the most pervasive myth that really impacts families that are working that find out that they have a child with a disability, and they want so badly for their child to make progress and learn, and they're willing to put anything aside, even their home language, if they think that it's going to benefit their child.

Ami: And especially if you're finding that this child has language delay, so, for example, a child's not talking. The first instinct there is like, okay, maybe he's getting confused with so many languages around there, so let's just teach him one language. That's not going to help the child. That's not going to help the family. And so you want to be able to do that. And I think there's such a loss when that child can only communicate in one language when the rest of their family or the communities speak different languages, and they might not be as fluent in that. So how could they even support that child's, say, for example, English language development if they themselves cannot speak that language?

Dawn: Right. So then what about this next one about children who are dual language learners being overidentified as having a disability?

Ami: Well, as you remember from the slide early on that Lillian highlighted, we know in Head Start, at least in Head Start, that children in fact who are dual language learners are underidentified. And oftentimes I think a lot of it, and maybe this is more my conjecture on that, is that professionals tend to be less likely to want to pursue that avenue for children because they're afraid, is it really a delay, is it really a true delay or is it really just their language? And I think, you know, we need to have good screening and assessment to really help us understand that. But what we know, at least from the latest data from Head Start, is that we're not identifying them as much as they -- we probably should be.

Dawn: I think that's so true. I think that's a lot of the concern that teachers and disability coordinators feel, that I just don't want to make a mistake when it comes to this, and there's just a lot that can be confusing about it. And so how do we make sure that we are accurately identifying children who are dual language learners if they have a disability? How do we make sure we're doing the right thing there?

Lillian: All right, well, I'm going to jump in here with some suggestions around that and talk about highquality and appropriate screening practices that reduces bias, both cultural and linguistic bias, in the process of screening. Since within the first 45 days of entering Head Start, as most of you well know, you're out there screening kids like crazy, it's usually a very busy time for Head Start teachers and disability coordinators. And so I'm here to give you a few suggestions around that today because really you're the first gateway into picking up children that really are already at-risk. We know a higher percentage of the students and children that you serve may have speech and language delays, other kinds of disorders, and so it's really important that your screening practices, one, help us pick out the kids we really should, and, two, don't necessarily overidentify those kids. So it's finding that balance. So

the first part of a process with a dual language learner that would look different than a child who only spoke English is really understanding their home language exposure, right? In the U.S., there's a crazy mix of languages usually going on at home, and different percentages of the day spent in each language and different people in the family that these young children are interacting with who speak different languages to them. So, for instance, they might be at home with their grandma in the morning, right -- maybe parents are off to work -- who speaks home language. They go into their Head Start, pretty much maybe English-only, right. Maybe a little bit of home language, but mostly English is what you see in the bulk of Head Start programs. Then they may even be dually enrolled in early childhood special ed, going into a different language setting. They come home, siblings are coming home from school maybe speaking English. Parents come home, and then it's back to home language. So if you look at these kinds of profiles, it's a real mix -- yeah, and so you're thinking, how much English should they know and how much home language should they know based on the amount of exposure? What we do know from research is children's current language ability is directly correlated to how much exposure they're having to each language. So it's really important as a first step in screening to figure out how much of each is going on.

Ami: And I think I just want to add on there, too, that sometimes when you ask parents to report what their home language is or are, and they might give you so much more, like, "Well, we speak this, this, and this," but the nature of the exposure to those languages will matter. Because, for instance, for my child, her exposure to my home language, which is Tagalog, will be -- is limited to perhaps when we're visiting family. But on a day-to-day basis it's not something --

Tam: Well, she's exposed to those two languages; exposure to her native language is much less than to English.

Ami: I mean, I've talked to her some in that, but I wouldn't say that it's -- it would be different than if you were exposing them in -- again, in routines.

Tam: Right, where the home culture is primarily the native language.

Ami: And TV's not going to be enough for that, too.

Lillian: Yeah, exactly. So that's the first step.

Tam: Oh, sorry.

Lillian: Oh, yeah, just going back, I just want to address those other questions. And then asking yourself how will you conduct the screening in a child's home language. There are screenings out there in Spanish that you can use, like the ESI-R, the DIAL. It just depends. The Brigance. None of them's a perfect tool, so I'm not here advocating use of any one of them. You have to understand the limitations of each of those tools, but thinking about how you can conduct the screening in the home language. [Inaudible] is there home language we need to be accommodating to that and not just using English instruments. Then a lot of Head Start programs are in the position of using interpreters to deliver these screenings. So thinking about, how do I get these interpreters and how do I train them? And then how will you assess knowledge in the home language? So if you're using an instrument that

you're translating into the home language, how will you interpret the findings of that? Because the standard scores will not be valid, but I'll talk about that more in the next part here. And then how do you involve the family in that process? Because they're integral to understanding that child's early development, if they have concerns, how does the child compare to other siblings, cousins in the family. So really actively involving them in that process usually means more than just asking them a question or two, so I'll give you some strategies for that as well.

Dawn: Yeah, so we want to ask, as you were talking about where you were in Minnesota, there are families that are coming in there that are speaking African languages that there's not a screening tool that's valid and reliable in that particular language. So I know you're coming in with some suggestions, but I think that's a problem that a lot of programs experience when they have new populations to their communities.

Lillian: Exactly. And so then you're really in a position of using an interpreter, but also thinking about, so you have an interpreter, and say you're using, say you're using some combination of maybe the Ages and Stages questionnaire, which has been translated into a lot of different languages, it's a nice way to gather information from families, but maybe you also want to observe some direct skills of that child, right, and maybe go through a DIAL or go through an ESI-R, or whatever screening you're using, so you can just see how they perform. What you end up doing there is really having to do some qualitative analysis using your professional judgment around, okay, so if this child just came from a refugee camp in Somalia or Sudan, they've never seen scissors, never seen blocks, it's not part of their daily thing, here I am giving -- they can't do it, does that mean they're referred to special education or does that mean they need some time in a Head Start program to get used to these materials, understand how to use them, understand what's expected. So I think that's where, when you're translating into low-incidence languages, one, you can't use the standard scores because you have not followed the standard administration procedures. Two, this test was not normed on children that maybe have had the early developmental experiences that these young children have had, so you really need to understand that it may take them some time to be able to perform at that normative, mean level. So that's where really Head Start programs and special ed can really work together and maybe have some kids that, say, score borderline or score below, but it's a we'll give them some time but not just throw up our hands and not check back in, right? But let's look at this child's learning rate over the first three months in a Head Start program and see where they end up in three months and do another check-in after that. Even though your screenings need to be done within those first 45 days, and I understand that mandate, you may develop systems for your dual language learners that allow you to extend that a little bit so you can be more sensitive about understanding the child's learning rate and their ability, once they're exposed, you'll see so many of those kids just take off, right? But you'll see some that look more atypical and maybe don't take off, and those are the kids that you can start maybe thinking about referring, because maybe there's more going on there than just lack of exposure or different kinds of experiences.

Ami: And I think to remember that screening is really just the beginning phase, and it's really what it is, it's screening. So it's not like you're saying, oh, this kid's going to go special ed, because that's not the purpose of screening. So you want to basically just ask, ooh, there's something that we need to keep looking at for this child. So it may be that you would do additional observations or you might go for a full evaluation, but I think just remembering what the purpose of screening is at this point for all the children, not just children who are dual language learners.

Lillian: Right. Oh, go ahead.

Tam: So with the home language, understanding their background, it sounds like -- you mentioned the questionnaire and making sure that we have solid background information. What are some other ways we can make sure that we're accurately screening a child?

Lillian: I think, so once you figure out their home language, also understanding home culture and their early experiences. And then you would want to make sure that you have an interview. So coming up here, I'll be able to provide a home language background questionnaire that you can use. So asking more than what language do you speak at home, but really what language do you use, what language do other people use, what language does your child use when talking at home, what language do they seem most comfortable in? The questionnaire goes into different times of the day, so during the morning routine what language is spoken, during the midpoint, in the evening what languages are spoken, so it's a more thorough kind of survey. And then also just asking some questions about the routine, and what does the family's routine look like, how successful is that child during the routine? Which sounds a lot like routines-based intervention, and it -- or routines-based interviews, and it is, but I also have added some questions that might be able to tease out some more cultural information about the families and the particular routines they have and the expectations for their child that they have, because child development can vary based on the cultural expectations for independents versus dependents, the social unit versus, again, the child being able to do things on their own. So those kinds of questions will also help us understand better what those developmental expectations should be cross-linguistically and cross-culturally.

Ami: So, Lillian, this survey, though, is something that they could take and perhaps modify or adapt to their own community, right? It's really just a starting point for people who are accessing this.

Lillian: Mm-hmm. And this -- go ahead.

Tam: I was just taking a step back, actually, briefly. I loved how you mentioned the importance of when you're using interpreters, that you don't necessarily rely on them administering an assessment that hasn't been normed based on the child's culture. So going back to that, how do you determine if a translator is or is not a reliable source of information? How do you work around that?

Lillian: So I'll take that up, and I'm sure Ami will have suggestions as well. But number one is really making them part of the team, right? And I know it's very hard sometimes to find those interpreters, but valuing them as your lens. Just like if you took a picture with a camera that had a scratchy lens, you would never get a great picture. So understanding that that interpreter becomes your lens into that child's development and into those family thoughts, because you're often interpreting those conversations as well. So, number one, making them part of the team. Two, investing in training then for them. So often these individuals are just folks in the community, you know, mean well, but don't necessarily have training as a professional interpreter, so making those professional expectations clear that there needs to be open communication, no side conversations. And they need training in the particular screening instruments that they're giving. They can't just show up and suddenly give the test, because they might not even know what they're supposed to be looking for. How do they

document the child's performance? What level of prompting is acceptable? So you need to invest a few hours with those interpreters, training them in the assessment, watching them give a few model assessments and see if they're able to do those screenings appropriately. So just like any other professional, I think we need to invest that time and training in them that so often they just sort of show up, and they aren't recognized as part of the team or the important role that they play. It's not just say what I say; there's a lot more going on there.

Tam: Thank you for addressing that, because I definitely felt in my experience working in early childhood special ed, I was so thankful to have the help of an interpreter, but then it was really fuzzy to me how I was supposed to interact via them and not being sure if they're actually accurately, like you said, administering the assessment or the question without providing prompts. So that's really helpful information.

Ami: And I think there's just -- let me just reiterate what Lillian was pointing out, was that there has to be some planning and thought that comes before you really introduce even an interpreter in this process.

Tam: Right, not just expecting them to show up on the day of the assessment.

Ami: Yeah, you can't force somebody -- a warm body off the street for this kind of thing. If you want to have something that's good and that's going to be reliable and useful for you, you need to really put yourself -- be thoughtful and planful right off of the bat. And you'll know what your student population is. I was just kind of scanning a little bit on the chats, and there was one program -- there was somebody who talked about how they have a large number of Arabic-speaking children in their program. And that's something that you would want to have, to make sure that you have somebody who you could rely on and who you would prepare and support you to help with supporting these children in your program.

Dawn: I think that's such a key role for the disabilities coordinator. They are really key to making sure that they provide that training to people who are going to be translating and doing the assessments -- or doing the screenings with children. So just more for them to do, but also to think about like what's going to make your training effective, and what do you need to do and what do you need to go over so you ensure that the screening is going the way that you need it to. One more thing I wanted to point out about the home language survey, you guys might have noticed in chat that you're getting links to different resources as we go through. And so there's a screening of a resource from the National Center for Cultural and Linguistic Responsiveness about ideas for screening dual language learners. So that's one resource you might have seen pop in there. And I think also the importance of home language survey is another one that we might have sent through, in through the chat. So just know we're sending you resources as we go through, and keep your eye on there. You can just click on it right there, and you'll already have something to hopefully help you.

Tam: Yeah, and these examples shared by Lillian, we'll also be sure to get some of these examples out to you in the follow-up document that we send out after the webinar. Now we have -- oh, go ahead.

Lillian: There's one quick question that was asked by a person -- a participant, and that's if it's ever appropriate to use a family member. We try to avoid that as much as possible to not put them in that role with their child. It's just complicated, right, in terms of them wanting their child to perform appropriately and... a complicated role. But I also understand that there's low-incidence languages. I understand that living in rural Minnesota for 10 years, that you just sometimes don't have the interpreters available. But hooking up with your local hospital clinics, local court system, you can often find interpreters through those two sources, because if they're in the community, there's some interaction with some other community agencies. Even public health, I've had good luck finding interpreters.

Ami: And local colleges and universities also you can find people, a lot of international students or students who are trying to -- who are themselves dual language learners, it doesn't have to be international.

Tam: I love these little nuggets you guys are giving us, yeah. Where were you when I was teaching? I needed you. Okay, so now we do want to hear from the audience. We want to hear from our listeners. We're curious to know, how often do you see teachers in programs using screening instruments in languages other than English? So go ahead and take a look at the question, and you can select often, occasionally, or not at all. And we'll be right back with you in just a moment. Okay, so this is actually really encouraging. It looks like... a lot of you are often seeing it, and then 30 percent are occasionally seeing it, and 14 percent not at all. So it is exciting to see that there is something going on there, but it looks like there's still programs that aren't using it at all and still quite a few that are only occasionally using it. So, Lillian, can you tell us, give us some tips on what we would -- what are some other ways that they could gather sources of data about the child so that we are sure to have an accurate picture.

Lillian: Okay, so I talked about gathering multiple sources of data. I'm not sure we're exactly on the right slide, but -- [Overlapping comments] but gather multiple sources of data, like the parent interviews we were talking about, observations in natural settings, if at all possible. So as the teachers, as the students or children are in the classroom, you can watch and see how they're progressing, going and doing home visits with the family-based home workers. What are they seeing at home? What are the communication patterns like? What is the child's functioning? Collecting child products: so what are they producing, and does it look like their peers in terms of their fine motor skills or other products that they produce in the classroom? Recording language samples, right? So what do you see at the beginning of the year versus maybe 30 days or 60 days into the program; do you see a change there? And then other authentic assessments, like there's a work sampling system and there's other ways that you could gather data about child development that doesn't rely on those standard scores, which, again, don't apply to a large percentage of your DLLs. Now, if there's an assessment, though, or screening in Spanish that's normed on Spanish speakers, you can use that if you have a native -- or Spanish-speaking person with native-like skills or is a native Spanish speaker to administer that screening.

Tam: Right. So we did have a question come up about the 45-day mandate and how sometimes teachers might feel or programs might feel like they need a little more time to get an accurate picture of the child's skills. Do you have any suggestions around that, or no?

Lillian: I think just going back to what I said is that you need to complete the screening within the 45 days. I mean, being in special education, I understand those federal mandates, and we need to stay in compliance with those, but being sensitive about who you refer and who you don't refer is a different question, right? Completing the screening and trying to gather that data within the first 45 days is important, but then thinking about what your next step is based on the data, I see one person said here, too, that they have a 90-day -- like a cover sheet where they wait, if they think they need a little bit more time to make that decision whether or not to refer. And I think one of the responsibilities of disability coordinators, too, is to really have open communication with your early childhood special ed providers in your community so that you can have running dialogues about particular children if you're kind of on the fence about whether or not they need a full evaluation and how sensitive that full evaluation will be to some of these issues around dual language learners. How much training have the special ed providers in your community had around dual language learners, and will they be able to gather all the sources of data that they need to as well to make good eligibility decisions?

Tam: And being planful about that probably at a program level, like you said, making sure that they have this information that we're offering today and that teachers are aware and informed and ready to go about this process in a planful way from the beginning.

Dawn: Yeah, I think that's another place where the disabilities coordinator could maybe step in and maybe provide some training to their LEA partners around how to use some of the evaluation tools that they're going to be using as well.

Lillian: Exactly.

Dawn: But you have some more tips about why ask families, right?

Lillian: Yeah, and I think some of this I've covered in conversation, and Ami can certainly chime in here, too, she has lots of experience with this, but number one, they're the native language and cultural experts, right? They know their family. And while we may have some general information about different language groups of cultures, each family's in a different range of acculturation, has different practices. Just as much as I wouldn't want to represent all Mexican-American kids who grew up in California, you don't want any one family to suddenly represent all of Vietnamese families in the U.S. So you want to make sure that each family has an opportunity to really present themselves for who they are given the myriad of cultural and linguistic experiences they've had. And they'll know their child the best. So I think that's why it's really important that we involve them. I developed a little handout called "Getting to Know Families," which is just meant to have some questions, so door opener kinds of questions, and that will be posted after the webinar. So asking families different questions about like, what roles do different family members play in caring for the child? Or, what future do you see for your child? Or, describe a mealtime. Who eats together? What kinds of foods are you eating? So you're working on a feeding program and you just to know generally what does that look like at home, so you could support that. Describe what you consider to be good behavior. That varies cultural in terms of those expectations. So just open-ended questions like that that will help you get to know more about the developmental expectations that that child's been exposed to so you can understand what kind of match is going on between your program expectations and those expectations on those screening instruments.

Tam: Right. Thank you. So I know you've already talked quite a bit about the role of disabilities coordinators and a bit on teachers in the screening process. Is there anything else that you'd like to add in about that based on your role as disabilities coordinator or teacher?

Lillian: I think being really mindful of setting up a process that you think will be -- that will gather the most accurate information. And I think that's the core of this all, right, is you can go through a process in a rote way and check off we did the process, but then really [Inaudible] for them whether or not they qualify or need to be referred -- sorry, need to be referred for a full evaluation. So even if it takes more time, accuracy is what we're going after.

Dawn: Okay. So let's get some strategies. What strategies can teachers use to increase participation of children with disabilities who are also dual language learners?

Tam: Yeah, so this is what we're looking forward to for disabilities coordinators to really be able to take back to the classrooms for teachers, like what can they do that will be effective in engaging these children?

Ami: So I think I'll take this on, and, again, Lillian, I think you and I will go back and forth on some of our ideas here. But one of the things I really want to emphasize, though, is that when we're working with children with disabilities, and whether or not they have — they also speak multiple languages is the fact that we really have to think about modifications specific to that child's learning needs, and individualizing our instruction to address their needs. So you have a child who has sensory concerns, and so you might need to make — you might need to make adaptations based on those concerns. But one of the things that happens, especially for children who are dual language learners who also have disabilities, is that perhaps one of their needs is that you would have to provide instruction for that child in their home language or in other languages... But really paying attention to their unique learning needs based on the assessment, based on their IEP or IFSP goals that you have on-hand that you would have had to develop with the families and with their priorities, making sure that you're addressing those things. And I think just to remember that that's what we need to think about generally for children with disabilities who are also dual language learners.

Tam: Right, so I hear you saying we're individualizing just as we would for all children. The only thing unique is that you're being sensitive to their home language and their culture and how that might influence them beyond what their developmental needs are.

Ami: Yeah, and for children with disabilities, they're -- these things are documented in their individualized education plans and programs, and so you would have to look at those and help develop them. Especially if those are developed outside of Head Start, if it's done through the school district, I don't know how -- in some communities, it's a little different, but for the most part, if the child comes in with that, you have to follow that as an agency serving children with disabilities, and that's just like the given...

Tam: Best practice, right?

Ami: Yeah. So I think just to kind of throw out some ideas there, so one of the things we really need to always remember is that for anything that we do with young children with disabilities who are also dual language learners, and pretty much for all children that we work with in our programs, is really be intentional, whether you're teaching new concepts, you're teaching them new words, you're teaching them new skills, you want to be very planful and intentional in doing this, because if you don't have that in place and if you're just kind of drawing things out of thin air at that moment, it's not going to work as well as it would if you had really thought through, how am I going to approach this child? Oh, I'm going to make sure that we move his chair over here so he can get more light so that his -- because his visual acuity would increase because that's what he needs. Or we may need to provide these kinds of supports for him as we teach him this new -- we're going to learn more about prepositions today, and so these are the things that we need to make sure that we have available. And that's something that you have to do -- as teachers we have to make sure that that's -- all those are in place before we even step in Monday morning to try some of these -- to do some of these things with children.

Tam: Right, that's a great point. It takes planning to make it happen.

Ami: Yes, absolutely. And we know for children with disabilities, the biggest thing is that we know that they learn. They can learn, and it's really -- what happens is that if they're not learning, it's possible that we're not teaching. And so what we want to make sure that we do is teach. And when we do that, as good teachers, as good educators, you have to look at like, okay, why is this child not learning how to wash his hands? Well, maybe there are just like so many steps that has to happen for this child to be able to really do it well and to accomplish that particular task. So what you want to do is think about what it is that you want to teach and then break it down into specific skills or simpler steps that would allow this child to say, okay, first I do this, then I do this, then I do this, and then that particular task gets done. Think about when you first learn how to tie your shoes or buckle your belt or button your shirt. I mean, those are things that there are so many pieces to that, and even though as adults we think, oh, that's easy peasy kinds of stuff, for children, young children, and children with disabilities, these are things that we have to break down for them to make sure that they really can fulfill and be able to do that. And some of these, for children with disabilities it takes some steps, takes a while for them to master each of these steps. So it may take a little bit longer. What happens with this for dual language learners is that you may have to provide additional supports to break them down into these simpler steps. So you might have to do it in multiple languages or -- and I think this feeds into the next strategy, is really thinking about using visuals. But I think this is -- Lillian, you were going to take -- talk a little bit about this.

Lillian: Yeah, so this is a strategy to use. I'm sure many of you out there have traveled to countries in which you don't speak the language, and you come back to your hotel room or wherever you're staying that night, and you're like, okay, I'm just going to shut down for a little while because it's been a long day, and I cannot think in another language. Well, these little guys are no different. What their environments, particularly our sequential bilinguals, who are coming in primarily speaking one or two home languages, their first introduction to English, the whole day's pretty much spent in English, it can be really cognitively taxing, and it's exhausting for them. So you think about your large group activities like your circle times, or you're doing the whole group reading, those kinds of things, it's important that those kids are allowed to take a break. And sometimes, as we know, young children will often enforce their own breaks by using challenging behavior to escape activities, right? And so what we want to do is provide a proactive or antecedent-based strategy here by offering breaks during some of

these activities. And so this is just a visual way that you can go about that. And during the break time, you want them to do something that's quick, consumable, and ends, right? So they can either walk up and down the hall maybe with an aide or someone or maybe go get a drink at the water fountain and then come back, but allowing them a little down time and then jumping back into the activity, because for --

Tam: Providing the amount of time so it's clear, yeah.

Lillian: Yeah, exactly. And you don't want the break time to be something like their most favorite activity, because then you might not be getting them back, but just recognizing that they may need shorter activities, one, would be an accommodation. Another accommodation would be to allow breaks during some activities to give them a little time to rest their minds and then jump back in.

Dawn: That is such a good point. You probably don't think about how much time children just might need to process and to take a break and to not have so much stimulation all the time. And I just think as a teacher, it's not just something you're thinking about all the time. You can easily not see that.

Tam: Especially considering what your developmental needs are. Then you're adding that additional stimulation on top of any other new skills that the child is really needing extra support to learn.

Lillian: Exactly. And I was going to say in Patton Tabors' book, "One Child, Two Languages," she also emphasizes the importance of sensory activities, particularly at the beginning of the year, with low demand, but lots of opportunity for communication, you know, around a water table, sand table, PlayDoh, you know, those kinds of things that you can still teach a lot, but it's a low-demand kind of activity.

Dawn: Oh, that's a great idea.

Tam: So this is one way to break down an activity, right, is to kind of shorten the length of it. It looks like we have another strategy here using visual supports, which you've mentioned briefly, but maybe you can elaborate on, Ami.

Ami: Yeah, so I think we all rely on visual supports in our day-to-day lives as adults. We have calendars, we have signs. You know, like bathrooms, we have to know which one's the men, women, or the gender neutral bathrooms. And we use -- we rely on those visual supports. And since they're young children, it's really important for us to have -- for them to have these kinds of supports that would allow them to navigate their day, navigate their routines, complete a task, to allow them to really understand what's going to happen now and what's going to happen next. And for children who are dual language learners specifically, it's another way for them to anchor kind of like a new word that they're hearing with something that they have to do. And something that would allow them to kind of connect, "Oh, that's what it means." When she says, "Find your carpet square," it's like, what is that? Unless there is a picture, unless it tells me what I'm supposed to do, it's hard for me to figure that out. Especially when you're using a lot of phrases or terms that are not, you know, like not translatable. I'm trying to think of some of these words, but it's -- so some of these things, like it's just not going to be easy for children. So one of the things I want to point out, though, is for young children especially, and

developmentally, when you think about children with disabilities is that you want to start with visuals that are more concrete. And the more concrete it is, the easier for children to really connect what you're saying with what they're supposed to do or what you're trying to get to them. As they get older, as they learn more words, as they learn more concepts, you can then progress towards kind of like more line drawings, like more cartoons, and eventually maybe just words, and have those available for children.

Tam: Yeah.

Ami: Yeah, so I think these are just some examples.

Tam: Lillian, could you share with us some of the examples that you shared with us?

Lillian: Sure. So this is just an example of a mini-schedule within an activity, so like what to expect. We're going to do -- oftentimes those circle times involve some sort of calendar story, singing, and then we're all done so that they know how long it's going to last, what we're calling the activity, so that's a simple example of that. You can go on to the next one.

Ami: Let me just add something, Lillian. So one of the things that I wanted to point out with these things is that these are through Boardmaker, so there's lots of programs out there that's available to develop these things, but one of the things to remember, especially for dual language learners, is making sure that the pictures themselves represent things that are familiar to the children and that actually they could relate to. So their teacher might not have blond, short, shoulder length hair, and they may have like a big -- I don't know, like curls and black hair, whatever it is that they might have. So you might try to -- you might want to make sure that you create these kinds of visuals that are more familiar to the children.

Dawn: Could you talk a little bit more about that, because I think that's something that can be a little bit challenging. You're a teacher that has a lot of different languages and cultures represented in your classrooms, and I know that's something that people really don't want to make a mistake at either. So do you have some tips for what teachers can do to try to make sure that they are representing the children, the children and families in their classrooms, accurately?

Ami: Yeah, so -- oh, go ahead, Lillian.

Lillian: I was just going to say number one is use actual photos of the kids and their families is one thing that I consult a lot about, is just using your digital -- in the digital age, so everybody's got their iPhones and everything that they can get, so just using authentic images is a great place to start.

Tam: Go ahead, Ami.

Ami: Well, and one of the things that you have to remember is like, especially when you're trying to put pictures there of children representing, say, different cultures or different countries, remember that we all don't walk around in our national costumes every day, so making sure that you have pictures of the children and families in more contemporary, you know, everyday kinds of clothing. And

I'm sure not everybody wears their Sunday clothes on other -- when they're playing in a park. So you want to make sure that you do present these pictures. And I think family pictures are the best way to start with this because then you'll actually get things that the children can relate to. They're like, "Oh, yeah, that's what Mommy looks like every day." She wears her -- whatever, her little muumuu dress around the house or whatever she might like to wear. But with this slide in particular, I really like it because it shows especially that the problem solving kit that's on the bottom there, those little cards. I think that's from a -- I'm trying to remember if it's from Alaska or...

Tam: Looks like AIAN.

Ami: Yeah, and they developed this, and looking at those pictures, a lot of the children can see themselves in there, and noticing that the children are wearing contemporary clothing, so they're not wearing feathers or things that you might see in powwows or things like that, because that's what they look like every day.

Dawn: Right. I know you also mentioned actually asking families and maybe going to your librarian for ideas of what to do.

Ami: Yeah, absolutely. So like if you're looking for materials for books, especially that represent children in a more contemporary, more nonstereotypical view, librarians are so good at finding that for you. So I would say go to your local library if you have one close by, especially, and if not, their website -- so I think like the Library Association might have some about like how do you pick books that are nonstereotypical. The Pediatric Association also has one. There's other organizations, reputable organizations, that provide those kinds of supports for teachers to identify appropriate books and materials.

Dawn: Okay, and then we also wanted to ask you about this strategy here about a help sequence.

Ami: Yeah. So again, for children with disabilities, it's not that you put something onto them and then they can do it by themselves. Especially -- so depending on what the task is and depending who the child is, you're going to offer them some kind of support, some help to make sure that they learn those skills in a way that they're not -- that they're not making too many mistakes or too many errors. Because, as you know, if you're making a lot of those mistakes and errors, you're less likely to be -- to not learn them and then also to get frustrated with them. And so with these kinds of help -- so you either give them physical help, you model for them, you give them verbal help, you give them nonverbal help -- these are the kinds of things that would help children begin to gain and learn some of those skills. But let me -- there's a whole lesson around this help sequence, because there's more to it than just this, but I want to identify some of the ones that I think teachers tend to use more of, but knowing that there's a variety of ways that we can do it. Verbal help is not saying, "I said so, I already told you that." That's not verbal help; I just want to say that.

Dawn: Okay. So we also wanted to ask you guys about teaching early literacy skills in the child's home language.

Lillian: Okay, so I'll talk really quickly. I have two minutes, so I'll be very fast. But I just want to point out that it's very important that children have access to early literacy skills in their home language because they may learn them more efficiently in a language that they know best. Particularly for our young Spanish speakers, we know there's a significant amount of transfer between Spanish and English because of the cognates, similarities in our phonological system [Inaudible] in home language whenever possible. Also, teaching new vocabulary. Just because that child speaks another home language, they also need to continue to develop novel vocabulary, kind of our tier two academic vocabulary in their home language as well as English. So having structured, intentional, going back to that, opportunities for the child to learn new vocabulary in their home language is important in addition to teaching those new vocabulary words in English.

Tam: And then if you're a child with a disability, you would need that in addition to a lot of extra repetition.

Lillian: Mm-hmm, exactly. And because children with disabilities often are also identified with speech and language delays, it becomes even more critical that they have access to that intentional vocabulary teaching in their home language as well. And then this gets to the point that you could do similar groups in both languages. I work a lot with programs -- I work with programs in Oakland, Kansas, in Kansas City, here in Utah, just all over, really helping them understand how to set up high-quality dual language experiences within the Head Start context. Most Head Starts that I've encountered now for their Spanish speakers have Spanish speaking staff, but the next step, I think, for Head Start is how do you use them appropriately, most effectively, honoring what they bring to the class and really providing instructional opportunities in English and that home language that work together to build skills in both. It doesn't mean that you have to do the exact same things in each language but that you're intentional about what you're doing in one language and how it supports in the other, and that really takes collaboration of the staff to make those kinds of opportunities meaningful and successful.

Tam: So then Lillian, can you kind of wrap things up for us and share like what are -- how can we intentionally use language to support children who are dual language learners that also have disabilities?

Lillian: All right, so given that they're identified with disabilities, we know that language is central to a lot of individuals -- or young children with disabilities, so we need to increase opportunities for input, and comprehensible input that they can understand in English, so it's very important to level your English level to what they can understand. If you're way too high, they're not going to be able to understand. If you're too low, you're not scaffolding their development appropriately. So really thinking about your intentional use in both languages, that it's at the right level. Use only one language during instructional activities. We even had a question come up about code switching. It's really important during instructional activities to refrain from code switching and going back and forth. It is not best practice to have the English-speaking teacher say something and then the bilingual person in the classroom just repeat right after. It's better to separate activities and do them in each with appropriate supports in each language for that child with a disability.

Tam: So very intentionally, right?

Lillian: Very intentionally. But I do want to bring up one point about social code switching at home. If parents code switch, we're not trying to interfere with natural communication patterns. This comment is really about instructionally in the classroom.

Ami: Yeah, I was going to say, because we get that question around conversations, and we're like, well, regular conversations, we tend to do that ourselves, and it's not -- it's not -- it's really about instruction, it's how you deliver a certain idea and concept to these children.

Lillian: Exactly. And I already talked about the matching English level, so go ahead.

Dawn: Sorry. Well, I know one other strategy that we wanted to share was about engaging peers.

Ami: Okay. And we just want to make sure that, you know, recognizing that you do have peers in your classroom who could support your -- support your children who are dual language learners who also have disabilities, and there's lots of different ways that you could do that to engage them. So just remembering that you have to create opportunities for these children to interact, because they can learn from each other. There's lots of ways that they can really gain skills from each other in terms of just being able to learn the new skills, learn the routines. I mean, children are such great teachers for each other, and so remembering that. The other piece is also allowing for children who speak the same language to have that opportunity to speak to each other. Because, like you said, sometimes you get to the point of like, okay, I'm done talking. And I remember when I first came to the United States, that was like, I would get so tired, my brain would get so tired having to speak in English and think in English all the time. I would call somebody to just like, "Okay, can you just please talk to me in Tagalog?" And it was so important for me to do that, because your brain truly, it truly gets tired. And so you want to have -- allow children to have the time -- yeah, a time in the day to really allow for them to just kind of have that opportunity where they can just talk to each other in their language however they want to talk to each other.

Dawn: Well, thank you guys very much. We're just going to wrap it up, because I know we're over time. But there are so many great strategies and tips that you all offered on this topic. I hope everybody was out there taking notes and keeping track of all these things. We do record these, and so the archive recordings are going to be temporarily available at disabilitiesdialogue.org, and then at some point they will be all archived and available on the ECLKC. And one other thing that you probably received an announcement for this week was the Disabilities Institute. That's coming up on June 17th and 18th in San Diego. It's a training just for disabilities coordinators. And so go to that -- find that Eblast, and you can use that link in the Eblast to register, and if you don't have it, just go ahead --

Ami: I'll be there, presenting on this topic.

Dawn: Ami's going to be there. Tam's going to be there providing training. If you don't have the information, just email ncqtl@uw.edu, and we can send you the information for it.

Tam: Please join us. We hope to see you there. And once again, thank you, Lillian and Ami, for taking time out of your busy schedules to share your knowledge with us. Have a great day, everyone.

Lillian: Bye. Take care.